

lam JUN 2 1952
★ ★ ★
Finance & Stewardship

Christian Stewardship

IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

E. LAMONT GEISSINGER
Associate Secretary
Department of Stewardship



GENERAL BOARD OF LAY ACTIVITIES
THE METHODIST CHURCH
CHILTON G. BENNETT, *Executive Secretary*





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

in

THE LOCAL CHURCH

1950 AND BEYOND



*A Stewardship Manual
for Methodists*

15¢ per copy
\$1.50 per dozen
\$10.00 per hundred

GENERAL BOARD OF LAY ACTIVITIES
THE METHODIST CHURCH
CHILTON G. BENNETT, *Executive Secretary*
740 Rush Street, Chicago 11, Illinois

General Board of Lay Activities

OFFICERS

RAY H. NICHOLS.....	President
D. STEWART PATTERSON.....	Vice-President
W. ROLFE BROWN.....	Treasurer
HENRY V. LOEPPERT....	Assistant Treasurer
CHARLES A. ROBBINS.....	Recording Secretary
CHILTON G. BENNETT....	Executive Secretary

STAFF OF THE GENERAL BOARD

CHILTON G. BENNETT....	Executive Secretary
W. ROLFE BROWN.....	Associate Secretary
JAMES H. TOUCHSTONE..	Associate Secretary
E. LAMONT GEISSINGER..	Associate Secretary
SHELBY E. SOUTHARD....	Associate Secretary
ROBERT G. MAYFIELD....	Associate Secretary

GEORGE L. MORELOCK

Executive Secretary Emeritus

E. DOW BANCROFT

Associate Secretary Emeritus

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION	4
I. CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP	7
The Original Source of Stewardship...	7
Stewardship as It Unfolds in the Old Testament	8
Christian Stewardship as Set Forth in the New Testament	11
Christian Stewardship for Today	16
What Does It Mean for Present-Day Christians?	
1. The Basis of Christian Stewardship	16
2. The Scope and Motive of Christian Stewardship Today	17
3. The Objective of Christian Stewardship	19
4. The Commitment of Self and Possessions to the Kingdom	21
II. OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP OF SELF...	23
Personality Is God's Gift to the Individual	23
Christian Personality Is God's Dream for Every Individual	23
Our Christian Stewardship of Self	24
Available Means for Developing Christian Personality	24
The Field of Action for a Developing Christian Personality Is Wide	27
III. OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP OF POSSESSIONS	31
An Introductory Statement	31
What Saith the Scriptures?	31
Property and Wealth Are Means Not Ends	
Our Christian Stewardship of Self...	24
1. Our Possessions—Property and Wealth—Are Instruments of Christian Expression	33
2. It Matters How a Christian Obtains His Property and Wealth	35
3. It Matters How a Christian Steward Handles His Property and Wealth	39
4. How Shall a Christian Steward Determine His Church Giving?.....	41
5. It Matters Whether We Give Ourselves and Our Possessions in Accordance with Our Abilities to Share Responsibility with Christ for the Effective Prosecution of His Work..	51
IV. THE PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH	53
1. The Field for Education, Cultivation, and Promotion	54
2. The Leadership	59
3. Types of Usable Instruments	63
4. Sources of Stewardship Information and Materials	64
5. "Follow Me" Still Pleads the Savior!..	66

INTRODUCTION

CHRISTIAN stewardship is vital to the destiny of the Christian Church. This becomes obvious to every person who gives it even a little thought.

The future of the Christian Church and the Kingdom of God is essentially linked with the principle of Christian stewardship. This was clearly demonstrated in the early days of Christianity. The New Testament Christians revealed with certainty their genuine acceptance of stewardship, as taught by Jesus, in lives truly dedicated to God. Time, abilities, possessions, their very all, were given in unswerving loyalty to Jesus Christ and beautiful sacrificial endeavor for his Cause.

This Manual is provided for the earnest consideration and action of the ministry and laity of The Methodist Church. It is hoped and urged that the suggestions contained in it may be accepted and incorporated into the normal program of the Local Church.

Missions, Education, and Evangelism are rightly accepted and incorporated as integral parts of the permanent, ongoing, unified efforts of the Local Church. Make vital Christian stewardship an equally integral part of the normal procedure of every Local Church and its effectiveness will greatly increase.

This Manual is offered because the Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ is a momentous one. That Mission is cosmic. There is nothing in all the world more important. One of the Bible's most widely known passages reads, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Jesus made the mission of the Church very clear when He commissioned it to share this good news with all the peoples of the world. Complementary to this is the passage which is called The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. It reads, "Jesus came and spake unto them [the eleven disciples—the first Christian disciples], saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." These Scriptures are in need of greatly accelerated implementa-

tion. Upon Christians individually and collectively rests the responsibility of sharing the blessings and benefits of the Gospel with all peoples who have not as yet received them. This is the one, supreme, all-embracing trust which has been laid by Jesus on his disciples.

This Manual is particularly concerned with the solution of three problems affecting the Local Church in any adequate program of Christianization, namely: (1) the shortage of trained workers available to carry on the program; (2) the insufficiency of funds to support its total program with its service agencies reaching out to the ends of the earth; and (3) the necessity for a more aggressive and greatly expanded program.

This Manual recognizes the serious necessity for successful cultivation in the lives of Christians of a positively dependable loyalty to Jesus Christ, and the creation of an overwhelming sense of responsibility to God for the Christian well-being of the world. The Christian has great spiritual freedom today. In this very freedom, gained through Jesus Christ, lies the most effective development of personality. *The solution of the Church's problems consequently rests in a fresh realization of the ideals of Jesus for life, a clearer vision of life's ultimate as well as immediate goals, and in Christian motivation for achievement.*

Let any Official Board or Board of Stewards adopt the principle and practice of Christian stewardship and incorporate it into the regular annual program of the Local Church, and it will experience a new spiritual life capable of making it a worthy instrument in the hands of God for the carrying out of "The Great Commission."

This Manual is concerned with and holds to the conviction that every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he lives at his best, accepts the principle and practice of Christian stewardship and dedicates himself and all his possessions to the total Christian enterprise. It will lead to victorious Christian living.

To all of these concerns this Manual is devoutly dedicated and sent forth. It assumes that Christian stewardship is worthy of "a clear channel" to the minds and hearts of Methodists.

E. LAMONT GEISSINGER

Five

I

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

The Original Source of Stewardship—
Stewardship as It Unfolds in the Old
Testament—Christian Stewardship as
Set Forth in the New Testament—
Christian Stewardship for Today—Its
Basis—Its Scope and Motive—Its Ob-
jective—The Commitment of Self and
Possessions to the Kingdom

STEWARDSHIP TAUGHT
MEANS
CHRIST'S WORK WROUGHT

I. CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

The Original Source of Stewardship

Stewardship began in the heart of God. This is clearly revealed in the first chapters of the Bible where the creation of the universe and man is thought of in such broad, sweeping terms and lofty idealism.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. . . . God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion . . . upon the earth. And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

In this conception there is a sharp distinction between God and the world, spirit and nature, the Creator and man's relation to Him, a distinction which is the magnificent contribution of the Hebrew mind and faith to the religious thought and life of the ages. At this early date it could only have been revealed by close spiritual communion with God, tested by the daily experience which gave it final validity for living. It makes the will of God supreme, places free personality at its very center, and gives spirit primacy over nature.

God's motive in creation in this conception is obviously rooted in His moral nature. What God did is recorded as "very good." He created the kind of man to whom He could give *responsibility* as well as the intelligence and power to fulfill it. The view is overwhelmingly supported in succeeding revelations which God made clear in the Old Testament prophets and then in Jesus Christ. God's motive in creation is further clarified in Revelation 4:11 in these words, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." God's pleasure is most perfectly fulfilled "in bringing many sons to glory," that is, into the likeness of his holiness, love, and blessedness, even into the likeness of "sons of God" as revealed in Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 2:10; I John 3:1, 2.)

This simply means that God has given existence to *free spiritual beings, capable of moral*

judgment, endowed with a sense of responsibility, qualified to live in fellowship with God, and challenged to so live in fellowship with Him as to constitute the "family of God" on earth. Here is stewardship in this Genesis story in its very origin.

Stewardship as It Unfolds in the Old Testament

In the story of the *Garden of Eden* the Hebrews made further contribution to the unfolding thought on stewardship. "The Lord planted a garden eastward of Eden and there he put the man whom he had formed . . . to dress and to keep it." Here man is represented as having been given *responsibility for developing a part of the created universe*. But irresponsibility stalked in the story. Man failed to do God's will, and was driven from the Garden. God told him that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." This, of course, refers to that other element in the Genesis story in which creation is represented thus: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Thus begins a long process of obedience and disobedience, of certainty and uncertainty, as man tried to discover the will of God and do it. He was given *responsibility and he must learn how to use it as a free spirit* in accordance with the will of his Creator.

Then *man's sense of obligation and the spirit in which he was to fulfill it*, is illustrated by the Hebrew mind in the story of *Cain and Abel*. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." "So Cain became angry and downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry, and why are you downcast? If you have been doing right, should you not be happy? But if you have not, sin will be lurking at the door. And yet he is devoted to you, while you rule over him" (Smith-Goodspeed). In Hebrews 11:3 we read, "Faith made Abel's sacrifice greater

in the sight of God than Cain's" (Smith-Goodspeed). Apparently God wanted sacrifices to be made in a proper spirit. In this story we find the first recorded acknowledgment of stewardship in material things in Bible history.

The *stewardship of life itself* was set forth by the Hebrew mind in such cases as that of *Enoch*, "*who walked with God*"; *Noah*, who obeyed God and "*did according unto all that the Lord commanded him*"; and *Abraham*, friend of God and father of the Hebrew race, who followed God's guidance implicitly.

In Genesis 12:1 it is recorded, "*The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. . . . So Abram departed.*" All God needed to do was to make his will known and Abram was ready to do it. Here is fine stewardship.

In recognition of their obligations to God, the ancient Hebrews erected altars, gave thanks for God's goodness and mercies, and offered as sacrifices the firstlings of their flocks and the first fruits of their produce. They made a contribution to the doctrine of stewardship *putting God first in their lives and giving Him their best*.

The *ancient custom of tithing* was practiced by the Hebrews as a definite recognition of God's ownership and man's stewardship. It provided a method of giving that was systematic and regular. It has had a long history. Men have paid tithes to their kings according to law for the support of the state and to their priests for the support of religion. The records of the Old Testament reveal that the tithe had the support of God. God to the ancient Hebrews was the owner of the land from which they got their living. "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*" (Psalm 24:1). Leviticus 25:23 sets forth their most basic of all laws relating to material possessions: "*The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine.*" "*Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills*" (Ps. 50:10). "*The silver is mine, and the gold is mine*" (Hag. 2:8). Consequently, *man owes God something*. Leviticus 27:30 claims "*All the tithe of the land . . . is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.*" Thus they expressed their stewardship.

A sympathetic study of the *Mosaic Law* will reveal many references to the Hebrew philosophy of stewardship of property. They gave back to God in recognition of this ownership. This practice was written into their Law. That Law was Israel's schoolmaster to impress discipline and save her from pagan infiltration during those centuries when her worship of the One true God was threatened.

But the Law had a tendency to crystallize into ceremonialism and formality. It was then that God raised up the Prophets to combat the tendency. They emphasized *inner righteousness*, and pointed out that inner submission and loyal devotion to God were essential. They cared for moral interests, inspired the people to spiritual growth, and fought an empty ecclesiasticism. They insisted that sacrifices and offerings were offensive to God and of no value unless made from the heart (I Sam. 15:22; Isaiah 1:16; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:7, 8). In this they helped to develop the doctrine of stewardship.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 a new religion is prophesied. The prophet said: "Behold, the days come, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Jeremiah here took the important religious truths of the most spiritual of the Old Testament Prophets and made them personal, and of the inner spirit. As we read his words we sense the principles and spirit of the New Testament. It is recorded in Matthew 16:14 that when Jesus came some of the people thought that he was Jeremiah. Then every time we share in the Lord's Supper we are

reminded that Jesus took the cup and said, "This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). Jesus probably got this term "covenant" or "testament" from Jeremiah. Obviously Jesus placed a high estimate on the spirit and teaching of the prophet. The new religion was to be a covenant different from the one made with the fathers of Israel. It was to be a religion of the *inner life*; sin would be blotted out by forgiveness; and men would have direct and immediate access to God in their fellowship with Him.

This concept of man's relation with God emphasizes, as does the New Testament, the importance and dignity of man. The Mosaic Law rested on the idea that the earth is the Lord's. The New Testament lifts up the wondrous love and care which God bestows on man. And *the inner life* of man becomes the very core of his stewardship. Jeremiah thus prophesied, and thereby made a great contribution to the doctrine of Christian stewardship. The writer of Hebrews 8:6-13 affirms that Christianity is the adequate realization of the hopes and ideals of this "new covenant."

Christian Stewardship as Set Forth in the New Testament

In the New Testament we find all of the foreshadowings of Christian stewardship, as we know them in the Old Testament, come to fruition and perfect expression in the life of Jesus. He knew that He came from God. He was sure that He was engaged in the Father's business, and that his Father had been in this business since the beginning of time. It is well to assure and reassure ourselves of this from the Scriptures themselves. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43). "The living Father hath sent me" (John 6:57). "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). "Therefore doth my Father love me,

because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18). "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:4, 5). Here is a Free Spirit, a Personality filled with moral judgment, endowed with a real sense of responsibility, qualified to live in fellowship with God, and perfectly committed to the task of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus is The Perfect Steward!

John was among those who recognized this. With clear understanding he surrendered himself and his all to Jesus. What beautiful words of self-committal are these: "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all . . . what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. . . . He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:30-36). No wonder we refer to John as the forerunner of Jesus! He recognized that Jesus was God's Son and our Savior, God's Perfect Co-Worker in the Kingdom of love, goodness, and happiness for mankind.

His witness of Jesus is a *fine piece of Christian stewardship*. "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:15-18). "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only

begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:12-14). *Christian stewardship* begins when a testimony like this becomes possible in the life of a follower of Christ.

Nicodemus opened wide his heart and life to Christian stewardship when he told Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:2, 3). Jesus gave *Nicodemus* counsel needed in the life of every present-day follower as well; Christian stewardship requires that a person be "born again" in order to commit *self* and *possessions* to the establishment of the Kingdom. This was the experience that opened the hearts of all New Testament disciples so that they were willing and glad to follow Jesus, giving over to Him and his Kingdom not only themselves but all of their possessions. "Neither said any of them [at Pentecost] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32). It led to a new conception of the relation of a man to his property.

In Matthew 21:33-41, the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, there is a verse which takes on stewardship meaning as soon as one gives it thought. "And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it" (vs. 34). The reference here is to the ancient Hebrew custom of an annual rental to be paid to God by those who have the use of the land, because "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). It reverts to the time when the Hebrews went in and possessed, as their religious right, the Promised Land. In order to support the priestly class, the Levites who had no land were supported in their religious duties by the payment of an annual rental on the land possessed by the other tribes. Jesus drew an inference from this fundamental fact which became one of the distinctive features of his religion. His deduction is that since the earth is the Lord's then man also belongs to God. He is not a rentor, or tenant, who can lease from God for a certain consideration the use of God's property. *To Jesus man is no longer a tenant, but a steward.* Jesus alone apparently used the

term Steward to apply to a man's relation under God to his property. A *tenant* uses property and pays rental for it during the time he actually possesses it. A *steward* does not own the property he temporarily uses. He manages and administers it for another. With Jesus, it is as if a steward says to God, All I am and have is Thine! As a steward, man manages and administers all his life and material possessions for God. This is full-orbed Christian stewardship as taught by Jesus.

What Jesus taught about stewardship is clearly indicated and strongly supported in such passages of Scripture as these:—(1) The Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30; (2) The Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-12; (3) The Parable of the Pounds in Luke 19:11-27; and (4) in asking and answering the question, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household?" in Luke 12:42-48.

When one considers the relationship of a *man to his wealth*, he will find unclouded wisdom in the teachings of Jesus on this perennially interesting matter. He certainly never condemned wealth; nor did He say that it was evil. Furthermore, He never indicated that in any way would he ever condemn a rich man to exclusion from the Kingdom of God on the basis of his wealth alone. It was how he used his wealth, as well as how he got it, that concerned Jesus because He knew that character was involved. It is impossible to show that Jesus ever condemned individual ownership of property, else how could a man freely make choices and manage his property for the development of his character unless he experienced a sense of possession. He taught everywhere that property belonged ultimately to God, and that man as a Christian steward was to manage it in the interest of getting God's will done on the earth.

There is a wealth of Scriptural references to support this statement. One finds evidence in such passages as: (1) in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), in which a reckoning is made concerning debt; (2) in the Parable of the Householder (Matthew 20:1-16), in which the steward is directed by the lord of the vineyard to proceed in accordance with his will; (3) in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-41), in which the husbandmen attempt to convert

their leasehold into an ownership that was absolute; (4) in the Parable of the Rich Farmer who was not rich toward God, (Luke 12:13-21); (5) in the Parable of the Fig Tree which bore no fruit (Luke 13:6-9); (6) in the story of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46; (7) in the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-10) where the King sent his servants to call those who were bidden to the marriage, but they would not come; and in other Scriptural parables and many single references.

For an over-all principle on a man's attitude toward his property and money, one may with certainty turn to the Sermon on the Mount and read: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20).

Then in II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, there is a superb example of the giving of money to the support of a Christian enterprise on the basis of what Christ taught by way of stewardship. It had to do with the famous collection which Paul supervised for the relief of needy Christians at Jerusalem. He gave two years of his life in gathering it, and these two chapters in II Corinthians clearly reveal the spirit of those who were involved in this great enterprise of practical benevolence.

Paul was trying to inspire the Corinthian Christians to support the collection. He told them of the Macedonian Christians who in their affliction and deep poverty gave very liberally, beyond their power to give and of their own accord. Their giving was prompted by a supreme spiritual consecration. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (II Cor. 8:5). *HERE IS THE VERY SPIRIT OF STEWARDSHIP AS IT IS TAUGHT IN THE GOSPELS.* Their disposition to give was a favor from God (II Cor. 8:1). Paul invited the Corinthians to give in this spirit also, thereby proving the sincerity of their love (II Cor. 8:8). He is convinced that adequate liberality is alone possible through Christ's Gospel of Love. He challenges them to prove that their love is real. He shows how Christ, though rich, became poor out of love for them (II Cor. 8:9). Their giving was to be similarly inspired.

Their giving will indicate that they gladly and willingly enter into God's plans and purposes if it has such qualities as these: (1) "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted ac-

cording to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (II Cor. 8:12); (2) "I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened" (II Cor. 8:13); (3) "first they gave their own selves to the Lord" (II Cor. 8:5); (4) "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:6-7). It will profit a Christian spiritually if he will live with these chapters of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians to catch their meaning, and govern his life according to their spirit and recommendations.

Stewardship is prominent in the early centuries of the Christian Church and was applied to everything a man was and had. Study I Cor. 4:1, 2 where it reaches after the preacher, and Titus 1:7 where it touches the top-ranking officers of the Church. And then take a look at I Peter 4:11 where it reaches the entire laity. No matter where one looks in the pages of the New Testament he will find Christian stewardship arresting his attention. Furthermore, he will find Jesus and his early disciples deeply moved by the conception of stewardship which pictures their responsibilities to God. They hold that a Christian steward lives daily in the spirit of one who knows that he belongs to God together with all that he possesses. His very life, his time, his abilities, his material possessions, his influence, his efforts—all belong to God. "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:23). So said Paul. So says, and lives, the Christian steward!

Christian Stewardship for Today

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PRESENT-DAY CHRISTIANS?

1. The Basis of Christian Stewardship

Christian stewardship is profoundly established in the very nature of the Christian religion, in the Christian interpretation of the person and character of God. It holds that God is the Creator and Upholder of the universe and man, and that *all* belongs to Him. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:23). His knowledge is comprehensive. His ultimate power is final. His presence is known wherever persons are willing to commune with Him.

Through a long series of experiences during the entire history of man, God has been revealing Himself, so that He has been available wherever man wanted to know Him. Nature all about us talks of Him. The Providences of God are everywhere. Scripture records how He has revealed Himself in the patriarchal age, through the Mosaic Law, through the Old Testament Prophets, through Jesus, the Perfect Son of God, and through the Apostles and the life of the early Church. He continues to reveal Himself, and has certainly done all within his power to make his will, his purposes for the human race, his love and his abiding solicitude for man known and accepted.

Furthermore, his revelations have been progressively received in accordance with man's growing ability and willingness to understand, love and accept Him. He has created and upheld man as a free personality, capable of accepting his guidance and help, and consistently shared with man responsibility for creating a civilization based on the perfect revelation He has made of Himself in Jesus Christ his Son. Christian stewardship is possible alone through the spirit and ideals of Jesus. He alone has given man his only perfect guidance. He exemplified Christian stewardship. So, apart from Jesus, Christian stewardship is utterly impossible. Man is in the very nature of life cast in the role of one who is obligated to God because of the sacrifice made by Jesus in his life of love and service and in his death on the Cross for our redemption. Christian stewardship is Christian discipleship on the highest possible level. Here is a foundation which will prove to be unshakable and abiding.

2. The Scope and Motive of Christian Stewardship Today

In order to understand Christian Stewardship in all of its completeness and power, one must turn to Jesus Christ, the Perfect Steward, and to Paul, the greatest steward among all Christ's followers.

In Jesus a whole life, the only perfect life, was and is made available to us for our guidance, help and happiness. Nothing less than the full commitment of all we are and have to Him and his Cause will suffice. We "are not our own." We "are bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19, 20). Our souls, our hearts, our heads, our hands, our all belong to Him—as Christian

disciples our total life feels the constraint of his life and love. Truly "the love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14). We are convinced that all of life is a stewardship. Our vital energy in every form, physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual, really becomes a trust from God to be used in totality for the establishment of Christ's kingdom in all the world. Our time, our abilities, our material possessions, our personalities, our influence, our very lives come within the scope of our Christian responsibilities. When we see life clearly, and see it whole, we see that we belong to Him. This is exactly the way Jesus, the Perfect Steward, felt toward the Heavenly Father. He was fully committed to the Heavenly Father and his ways.

As a disciple of Jesus, Paul gave him everything he had, his life, his all. Paul was convinced that Christ's great love had laid hold on him, and this conviction became the driving power in his life. The Cross of Christ was right at the center of the experience. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). As far as Paul was concerned, Christ died for him. Of that he was sure. And he claims that "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15). For all who become followers of Christ, if it be necessary, there comes a shift in their loyalties; and the power to make such a shift becomes clear in another of his statements, namely, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

What gave Paul motivation to give *his all to Christ*? Listen to him again when he says, "We make it our aim . . . to please him" (II Cor. 5:9. R.S.V. 1946). Furthermore, he feels a deep accountability for giving his all. He says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). No wonder he could make such a revolutionary shift in his affections and loyalties from persecutor to promoter of Christianity! There is no shift, however severe, which we cannot make in our lives if we see clearly that we "are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:23). When such a stage of

spiritual growth is reached, selfishness and the selfish use of ourselves and our all get a severe jolt. Our all goes on the altar!

3. *The Objective of Christian Stewardship*

The main objective of Christian stewardship today is, as it has always been, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. This was the life mission of Jesus, and to that task He has directed the attention and efforts of all of his followers.

Someone may ask, What is the Kingdom of God? Probably the best reply would be that the Kingdom of God, according to the conception of Jesus, seeks (1) to get the will of God done on earth; (2) to have the fatherly goodness of God enjoyed by all mankind; and (3) to create a society of persons who, loving God, reflect his loving character. At least these are the elements which the followers of Jesus have been striving to effect since the birth of the Church at Pentecost.

Jesus certainly made it plain that these elements were at the center of his life. The rule of God would be established by their achievement. This He taught, and claimed that it could be realized at will in the lives of individuals who loved Him and gave themselves to Him in full self-surrender. He did everything within his power to get men started into this Kingdom Way of Life.

In the first sermon He ever preached He pointed out that "The Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). In his Sermon on the Mount He set forth the principles of this Kingdom. In teaching the well-known "Lord's Prayer" to his disciples, He placed the petition "Thy Kingdom come" in the very first part. He called his Twelve Disciples together and taught them the principles of the Kingdom so that they could carry on after He had gone. All of his parables are genuinely concerned with the Kingdom. They dealt with its establishment, revealed its nature, and showed how its members should be related to God and to each other. They taught that the members of the Kingdom should be willing to give themselves and their all to it. No one can read the Parables without becoming convinced that the Kingdom would some day be a reality. Jesus put the Kingdom at the very center of his life.

He invites us to share with Him responsibility for its establishment. "Seek ye first the

kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:14, 15). Jesus told a scribe who counseled with him about priority of commandments, when Jesus saw that his response was correct, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). He said on another occasion, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent" (Luke 4:43). Jesus told the Twelve as He sent them forth to do his work, "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:7). It was to the work of this Kingdom that He referred when He said to his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24); "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19); "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29-30); and "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). He finally went to the cross for the Kingdom of God.

Christian stewardship has to do with our sharing with Christ responsibility for the establishment of this Kingdom, a world of Christlike persons living together as the family of God under the exemplary ideals and life of Jesus. This is the objective of Christian stewardship which got hold of the lives and possessions of the early Christians, and should appeal to us in such a way that it will get hold of us.

Or it might be said in this way, namely, that Christian stewardship is that all-embracing contribution of body, mind, and spirit which a Christian makes in using his time, abilities, and material possessions as a trust from God, and in purposefully working with Him to accomplish his designs for humanity.

4. *The Commitment of Self and Possessions to the Kingdom*

In an innocent appeal to those who feel the weight of life's responsibilities and struggles, Jesus pleads, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke [my Mission] upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). He also said, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:38); and "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for *the disciple that he be as his master*, and the servant as his lord" (Matt. 10:24, 25). Surely it is obvious that He meant to convey to his disciples the conviction He held that his "yoke" was really "easy" and "light" and actually gave "rest" for souls in contrast to the oppressive disillusionment that comes to those who stumble along through life without Him. No wonder Paul concluded, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ . . . And I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings . . . that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:7-12).

We, as Christians, hold responsibility for sharing this experience of the Kingdom with those who have it not. How utterly blind we would prove ultimately to be, and how utterly devoid of gratitude, if we should refuse to consecrate ourselves fully to the service of the Christian life! At the age of twelve Jesus recognized that He had a mission when He said to his bewildered relatives, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). In his later years He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). He says to us, "Follow Me." Let us share his mission, experience some of his sufferings, and understand the power of his resurrection by becoming Christian stewards of ourselves and our possessions.

II

OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP OF SELF

Personality Is God's Gift to the Individual—Christian Personality Is God's Dream for Every Individual—Our Christian Stewardship of Self—Available Means for Developing Christian Personality—The Field of Action for a Developing Christian Personality Is Wide

STEWARDSHIP TAUGHT
MEANS
CHRIST'S WORK WROUGHT

II. OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP OF SELF

Personality Is God's Gift to the Individual

Stewardship has no true meaning apart from human personality. When we speak of the stewardship of self, we speak of the stewardship of an entire person, including personality, which relates especially to the distinctive character which makes one person different from another.

Human personality is God's gift to the individual, a most potent force in the world. It is true that the most powerful influence anyone can wield is that which is made possible through this subtle self which unfolds through the years, taking on qualities and characteristics which make it distinctive and put it in a class by itself.

When God formed man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, giving him a self and a soul, He made possible for man the experience of stewardship.

Christian Personality Is God's Dream for Every Individual

God's ideal for a person is that he shall attain in his lifetime his highest potential excellence. This *ideal* becomes a person's first and most important obligation as a Christian steward.

The whole person is needed in living such an ideal. Whatever a person does, whether it be moving about, thinking, feeling, willing, or doing, it brings his whole personality in action. It becomes very clear what the writer of the Epistle to the Romans meant when he said, "I plead with you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present all your faculties to Him as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to Him . . . an act of reasonable worship" (Romans 12:1—Weymouth). One's disposition, one's presence, and especially one's character are certainly involved. His attitude toward himself, what he thinks about himself, how he feels toward himself, and what he desires for himself—all come into the picture as he contemplates himself as a Christian steward. Paul, seeing this clearly, wrote to the Galatians, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son

of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (2:20). This is God's dream for the individual, yes, for every individual.

Our Christian Stewardship of Self

The Christian is a follower of Christ. Jesus teaches that to become rich in this world's goods and yet fail to develop one's personality is the most tragic of human failures (Mark 8:36). He therefore called men to follow Him and become like Him. Persons who sincerely respond to the call of the Son of God attain a measure of Christian personality, the highest excellence in character yet known to man. Christ's life has little meaning if separated from this ministry, his stewardship, of bringing this richer life to men. Life to Him meant identifying Himself with the welfare of persons, infusing personality everywhere with his spirit, and challenging people to join Him in filling the world with Christlike persons. He calls upon us to help Him in this Christian stewardship. It means that we must see all of life through the eyes of Jesus and, seeing thus, permit Him to live in us. This is our Christian stewardship.

There is something definitely sublime about this for it requires that every person must make definite choice of Christian courses of action, and at the very center of his personality, namely, his will. The will surrendered to Christian discipleship is of the most serious significance. Yet such surrender holds God's secret to the most lasting happiness and potential service. What spiritual victories could be won if Christians fully surrendered their wills to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in this world! To the everlasting commendation of the early Macedonian Christians Paul wrote of them that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (II Cor. 8:5).

Available Means for Developing Christian Personality

Christian personality is of extreme significance. Our first stewardship obligation is to develop its potentialities to their highest excellence. In pointing out means now available for its development, a few preliminary principles should be set forth. One is that the renunciation of self is at times called for. It is true

that there is a sense in which one "saves his life" by "losing it," and "loses his life" by trying to "save it." One receives through giving and loses through withholding. Attainment of the riches of God's kingdom of love and spirit may be made repeatedly by persons who bear crosses in the name of Christ. Then, at times, our wills clash with the will of God. We develop Christian personality by saying to God, "Not my will, but thine be done." So it is well for the disciple of Christ to fully surrender himself and all that he possesses to God without reservation.

Of course, the Christian has full liberty in this matter, and it is helpful to note that this fact of freedom taken in its finest sense was one of the features of Christianity which thrilled the hearts of the early Christians. A similar liberty is ours today. We are "called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). It is the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," (Gal. 5:1) and based solidly on a deathless love for Christ. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Col. 3:16). This will help the Christian steward to feel that he is under obligation to use certain available means in furtherance of the development of his own Christian personality. Here are a few of the essential means now available to us.

Christian personality develops *through one's devotional life*. The private hours spent in the conscious presence of God, as well as those high moments when kindred personalities meet together to worship Him, are time-tested and available means to this end. Communion with Him—prayer in its finest reaches—will irrevocably make a lasting contribution to one's spiritual well-being. Intercessory prayer certainly makes for breadth and quality of Christian personality.

Christian personality develops through one's use of the *Scriptures*. The Christian steward knows they are a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. He is sure that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). He finds these writings profitable for teaching, correction, reproof, and instruction in righteousness. They will furnish him com-

pletely for every good work. He will read "*The Book of books*," study it, and familiarize himself with those passages which kindle, nourish, and strengthen him most.

Christian personality develops as one has fellowship with kindred spirits in the *Church*. When one can say "I love Thy Church, O God," he is in the way of Christian growth. He knows that the Church is the institution which is always available to keep the windows of one's soul open heavenward. He sees in the Church a congenial fellowship in which Christian personality may grow, and through which unparalleled opportunities for service are continually offered. He knows the Church's character-making potentialities and he recognizes that incentive and opportunity for Christian sympathy, compassion, and love flourish in its midst. He knows what happens to his soul when he sincerely gives himself to the Church and generously supports it. When one accepts Christian stewardship for the ongoing life of the Church, his own personality is bound to grow more like the Christ.

Christian personality develops when one handles *property* as a Christian steward should handle it. Jesus frequently recognized the character-making quality inherent in the right use of property. When we hear someone talk about the Sermon on the Mount, we seldom think of our possessions. Yet right at its heart is a principle which will guide us unerringly as we obtain property and handle our material possessions. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20). How often we have heard and read it! Are we willing to let ourselves be guided by it as we acquire property and handle our earthly goods? It shows how we can take on spiritual riches as we acquire and use our earthly goods. It will always prove for the Christian steward a valuable factor in developing Christian personality.

These forces which make for Christian personality are not provided solely for the development and enrichment of our own lives. They fit us for a larger service. They help us to help others. The true Christian steward communes with God and pleads with Him in intercession for others. He masters the message of the Scriptures to incarnate its truths in his own life and lead others to obtain their inspiration, illumination, and strength-giving power. He undertakes responsibility for the Church and

its work because he would extend its ministry and the means of grace which it provides. He acquires and handles his property and material possessions in line with the spirit and precepts of Christ and thereby helps introduce the spirit of Christ into organized economic and social life. As a steward he is under obligation of love to yield his developing Christian personality to Christian enterprises.

The Field of Action for a Developing Christian Personality Is Wide

Christian personality should make itself felt *first of all in the home*. God ordained the family and made it the training ground for those of tender age. When parents possess Christian personality, the children certainly know it and are influenced by it. If by some magic word all family life could be thoroughly Christianized, it would not be long before the whole world would be taking on the nature of the family of God. We know that no such magic word is possible, but we do know that for every parent possessing Christian personality, the world is that much better off. The family—the home—is the most fruitful field for Christian personality.

Christian personality should make its influence felt *in the field of vocations*. Daily vocational pursuits are filled with excellent opportunities to make Christian personality count. What an opportunity vocational life presents to picture to the world the Christian religion in action. In too exclusive a degree in the past we have considered the life of the clergyman and missionary as of top priority in getting the Christian religion into the life of the world. We are becoming more alert to the possibilities of the world being won to Jesus Christ through the employer and employee, the banker and depositor, the farmer and industrialist, the storekeeper and the customer, the physician and the patient, the conductor and the passenger, the radio commentator and his audience, the lawyer and the client, teacher and pupil—every business and social relationship provided by the vocational life. One's vocation becomes genuinely Christian when it is the medium through which a person consciously and unconsciously influences others for happy and satisfying relations with Jesus Christ. Whatever his vocation, the

Christian steward's major business is to extend the Kingdom of Christ.

Christian personality should make itself more pointedly felt in the experiences of *citizenship*. The followers of Jesus Christ should make the best kind of citizens. A person cannot love the Lord Jesus Christ and ignore citizenship as a field for the expression of Christian personality. There are those who feel that our political life is a life of compromise which levels downward rather than upward. Of course, there are evidences that the feeling is not entirely without foundation. Yet here is an area in which the Christian life should be much more influential than it is. Do we not have a stewardship for this?

Christian personality must make itself more effectively felt in *world affairs*. Jesus commissioned Christians to share with Him the winning of the world to his ideals. The great missionary movement through the centuries has been the Christian's answer. However, it has never been supported either in personnel or money to the degree that would focus the spotlight of the world's attention on the ideals of Jesus, and prove sufficiently successful in their application to international affairs. This important experience still lies ahead of us as Christian stewards, and stands as a spiritual challenge to developing Christian personality.

The Christian *use of personality* naturally follows its development. It cannot escape this fundamental requirement of Christianity. Every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ has a stewardship in this respect. He will be held accountable for what he does with his time, his abilities, and his possessions, but his primary accountability will involve what he does with himself. What he does with himself will largely determine what he does with his material possessions.

III

OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARD- SHIP OF POSSESSIONS

An Introductory Statement—What Saith the Scriptures? Property and Wealth Are Means Not Ends—Our Possessions Are Instruments of Christian Expression—It Matters How a Christian Obtains His Property and Wealth—It Matters How a Christian Steward Handles His Property and Wealth—How Shall a Christian Steward Determine His Church Giving? It Matters Whether We Give Ourselves and Our Possessions.

STEWARDSHIP TAUGHT
MEANS
CHRIST'S WORK WROUGHT

III. OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP OF POSSESSIONS

An Introductory Statement

Christianity has a clear word of counsel concerning possessions, and by possessions we mean *material possessions*, or things. God has a purpose in having made it possible for individuals to possess materials and things.

Material possessions, with which we are now concerned, are a vital part of our Christian stewardship. They are values related to the individual person. They are to be found in the form of bonds and business investments; capital, commercial and industrial values; factories and machinery; income and interest; land and livestock; real estate and rent; money and all forms of legal tender; as well as other economic values, which accrue as income from the coordinated use of our material possessions, our thought, and our daily effort. All are involved in what we ordinarily call property and wealth.

When we say that we possess property, wealth, money, we mean that we occupy, own, hold, or control it. Society, through the centuries, has built up the sense of possession in terms of ownership to such a degree that when we say we "own a thing we feel we have exclusive right to possess, enjoy, and dispose of it in accordance with our own desires.

Possession is the fact or state of being under one's control, whether the thing possessed is owned by ourselves or others. Possession may be interpreted as a "holding" for a period of time, long or short.

What Saith the Scriptures?

As soon as a Christian begins to think in such terms as these, if he has even a scant knowledge of the Bible, its associated passages begin to pop out at him in lively array. Note some of them. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt. 6:24). "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22). "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32). "For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:34-

35). "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19). "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

But *another strain of meaning* comes in such passages as these: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness?" (Romans 2:4). "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephes. 2:7). "The unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephes. 3:8). "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephes. 3:16). "But my God will supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

There is still *another strain* which we are likely to gloss over because it does not seem nice. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17). "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten" (James 5:2). "Woe unto you that are rich!" (Luke 6:24).

And in the very heart of that famous Sermon on the Mount we hear this call to the best that is in us: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19-20).

Some of these Scriptural passages indicate that Jesus and his early followers saw clearly that the tendency of men, their chief interest and insistent preoccupation, were to gain possession of wealth and riches. It ought to be obvious to any thoughtful person that property and wealth must not be ends in themselves; that other people are to be considered in all human efforts; and that love for humanity must come into its own.

Property and Wealth Are Means Not Ends

One of the insistent experiences of men throughout history has been to consider things

as ends in themselves, instead of means through which they could know God and work with Him. There are those who have allowed selfishness, covetousness, and unbrotherly greed to nullify the divinely intended sacramental purpose of property and wealth. "The love of money" often becomes the root of all kinds of evil. But it need not do so if men will love it for what it can do for the Kingdom of God. Thoughtless men in seeking and handling riches too often become self-seeking and avaricious, self-sufficient and conceited, covetous and grasping, dishonest and unjust. These sins grow out of failure to acknowledge God's ownership of the resources of the earth.

1. *Our Possessions—Property and Wealth—
Are Instruments of Christian Expression*

Christianity insists that the original Source, and the ultimate Owner, of all natural and material resources is God. It holds that men working with these resources may become like Him in their expressions, build up the values of these resources, convert them into ingenious instruments for human comfort and assistance, and, in further cooperative creativity and use, provide for the "family of God" on earth. It contends that they are sacramental instead of a means for satisfying selfish whims and fancies, and must be considered as a trust from God to be administered by man the steward.

Truly "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1). "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10). "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (Hag. 2:8). And so are the coal and copper, the gas and oil, the zinc and lead, the salt, the uranium and pitchblende, the potash and borax, the diamonds, the sulphur, the iron, the forest and fields, the air and rain, the soil and sunlight, the rocks, the gravel and sand, the water, the clay, etc. All are the original resources which He created and over which He continues to exercise regulative power. God gave man dominion over them to use them for his needs and the development of his moral, physical, mental, and spiritual powers. God knew that life could have no value apart from natural resources.

It insists that property and wealth have a positive value for social experience. They have a real part to play in society. They are essen-

tial to human continuity and progress. God created the world of material things to furnish the basis for the Kingdom of God, in which provision was to be made for everybody. Life, because of all these resources, was to become increasingly abundant; men were to become increasingly more alert to the presence and helpfulness of God; and the managing of these resources by men in cooperation with God would constitute an elemental experience in expressing the super-law of Christian love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind, and with *all* thy strength: . . . and . . . thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31). The activities of human beings must feel the creative power of God's life and love. Men must begin to think of and handle things in the way in which God intended them to be thought of and handled, namely, as a means of grace which will enable men to know and worship God and express themselves as disciples of Christ. The basic idea of possessions in Christian stewardship is that all things are holy and must be used for holy ends, the glory of God, the training of the souls of men in the spiritual and mental attitudes of God, and helping Christ bring his righteous Cause to consummation. A genuine Christian steward is always activated by such convictions.

It is a very interesting thing that Jesus never condemned property and wealth as such. Search the Scriptures as you will, this can never be denied. He struggled to convince men that they should make wealth their servant rather than let it become their master. He did say some hard things against those who used it solely upon themselves and for the purpose of "lording it over" their fellows. He said some embarrassing things against those who, rather than serve others, wanted to receive all the services themselves: and against those who counted it far more to their liking to receive rather than to give wealth to the welfare of humanity. He knew that wealth could prostitute a man, if improperly acquired or handled. But He knew also that the poverty-stricken could fall to very low levels of degradation. He considered poverty one of the world's most emphatic evils, but He also recognized that there were evils worse than

that. He saw so much of poverty in his own day. His heart was touched by the sufferings and handicaps of those who suffered the pangs of hunger and the limitations of poverty. His stories, drawn from the life of his day, reveal his thoughts. "How much more is a man worth than a sheep" (Matt. 12:12—Moffatt), that is, than material possessions. His inimitable story of Dives and Lazarus makes clear to any open mind the terrible social differences to be found in the selfish rich and the degraded poor. Christ's Way of Life could do much for both types! The successes and failures of men to live the life of love as related to their possessions reveal the degree to which the Christian life empowers persons to live at their best. We must remember that we are "the body of Christ" (I Cor. 12:27).

Jesus said much about money, the most usable of all possessions. Many of his parables dealt with this medium of exchange. In the Gospels He frequently referred to a man's attitude toward property. He knew that bad men could work terrible wickedness, and that good men could work wonderful blessings with the money possessed. He recognized the spiritual values inherent in money. To use it as an instrument of righteous expression would constitute a normal part of his way of life.

2. It Matters How a Christian Obtains His Property and Wealth

(1) The possession of property and wealth calls for the exercise of Christian stewardship in a very tangible form. How a person gets his possessions is the first important hurdle a Christian, after he gives himself, has to negotiate in order to get started properly in Christian stewardship.

Christianity has never questioned the fundamental right of an individual to hold and use material possessions. It has always seemed natural for a person to have possessions, whether he got them as gifts from others or through his own creative efforts. Where difficulties begin to appear is at the point of getting wealth. Does one's commitment to Christ have a bearing on it?

There are those who somehow have the natural ability to "make money." This ability is certainly not worthy of condemnation when it is used righteously and creatively. As a

Christian steward a person so endowed can be of immense importance to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. But if used unrighteously and to the injury of others it comes under the condemnation of the Heavenly Father.

Jesus laid down the law of increase in his familiar story of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). It was required of each one to whom talents were committed that they put those talents to productive use. There is the story of the man who went forth and cast seed upon the earth only to awake and realize that nature had helped him in his task. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:26-29). Men should not forget the help God gives them. "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:17, 18). This is not only true of one who works with the soil, but of all of us who work with the natural resources which God has provided and upon which our total economy is based. We must never forget that a good God has had a large part in our successes and that we are wise to acknowledge Him, and do his will. It is a wonderful advance in personal growth to recognize our obligations to Him and his cause, and *that we work with Him*.

Then in getting our property and wealth it is right to recognize that Christian stewards are to interpret the law of love and service as taught by Jesus. Christians would become spiritually aggressive in our whole economic system and in a perfectly natural way if they were to take this matter seriously.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus sets forth another of those principles which a Christian steward may well afford to recognize in acquiring property and wealth, namely, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-20). Jesus certainly considered it rightful to acquire property and wealth, otherwise heavenly treasures would be impossible. He must have considered it necessary for a person to create and produce in order to promote his own welfare and satisfy the requirements of Christian beneficence. We must first possess earthly treasures before we can, by consecrated use, convert them into

heavenly treasure. If we are to store up a rich spiritual inheritance, property is necessary.

One's vital energy of muscle and mind, one's time and training, one's skill and abilities are all involved in acquiring property and wealth when these are the result of our own efforts. And at this point it must be emphasized that how we get our possessions certainly has a transforming influence on our characters. If righteously acquired, then righteousness results. As gifts honorably received from others, the transforming influence resides in their righteous administration. To summarize, our characters are enriched and enlarged in our righteous getting of property and wealth, and we are assured that others are actually helped in the process.

(2) Fundamental Elements in the Production of Property and Wealth.

We seldom hear any more about the "self-made man." Is it because the masses of mankind now recognize that more elements are involved in what a man makes of himself than at one time supposed? It will profit us to pause long enough to look at a few of these elements.

There is the long development of the human race into whose inheritances every man enters. Truly, we are here indebted beyond what we are accustomed to acknowledge. There is the *good God* who supplied us with our very lives as well as all our natural resources. *Society* has provided us with needs to be supplied, making industry and business possible. There is the *State* which gives organized protection and the skeletal outline of freedom within which we work. There is *capital* accumulated through the efforts of past generations as well as our own, and without which progress could not be made in social experience. Upon it we depend to make greater wealth possible. It is the outcome of God, society, and the individual working together.

When one considers all of these varied elements it is obvious that anyone who possesses property and wealth today is obligated to God and society in a measure commensurate with his holdings.

(3) Testing Our Methods of Obtaining Property and Wealth.

It is important that Christian stewards spend their money and use their property and wealth righteously. It is equally important

how they get their possessions. God is interested in both, and will sooner or later require them to render an account. Can Christian stewards test out the righteousness of their money-getting ways? Are not some tests almost axiomatic? For instance, must they not be just in all their dealings with their fellows? Is there any better motivation than that expressed by Paul when he said, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II. Cor. 5:14)? Is it not possible to express in all we do the resultant love in our own hearts for our fellows, and somehow make it felt? In all of our money-getting and our accumulation of property and wealth, love and justice should be poised over us and felt within us. Are these criteria too vague and intangible?

These tests might be put in another way with even clearer understanding. For instance, do our money-getting and our property accumulation actually help us to grow spiritually and take on more perfect expressions of Christian character? Do they wreck the characters of and hurt our fellow men, whether near to us or remote? Do they lower the moral standards of society? Do they disregard the will of God for our lives? Do they injure little children and youth and cripple their lives for the future? Do they enhance the over-all value of the Church to our community? Do they help promote God's will throughout the world? Remember that at this time these test questions are being asked concerning our money-getting and our accumulation of property and wealth. Surely, if heeded, these criteria will help us to do righteously in this regard.

Zacchaeus set a noble example for wrongdoers in the getting of property and wealth. Barnabas by his attitude toward property and wealth revealed that Christ had gotten hold of him.

(4) The Over-All Purpose in Individual Possession of Property and Wealth.

Why should a man strive to obtain property and wealth? Surely, not for the simple possession of it; this would make possession an end in itself, and perilous for the possessor. Yet this is exactly what thoughtlessness concerning possessions often brings about. The real reason for holding property and wealth reaches farther than this.

Has a person the right to get and hold

wealth for his own spiritual growth and welfare; for the protection and care of his immediate family and for educational purposes; for benevolent assistance to the needy; for self-support in old age? Why not? This seems a normal, necessitous, and natural thing to do. Religion on the highest levels does not decry such aims. Jesus obviously held such achievements in mind when He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10). But he emphasized something above and beyond this when He counseled his followers, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. 6:33). Were every Christian steward to do this it would convert into Kingdom assets every personal good for which one seeks property and wealth, and make of first consideration the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. What a power for God and righteousness every follower of Christ could be! Property and wealth then become the means for improving one's life, showing love and goodwill to others, and using possessions for the Cause of Christ.

3. It Matters How a Christian Steward Handles His Property and Wealth

(1) It matters how a Christian steward administers the sum total of his possessions.

Christian stewardship is the whole-time administration of all our property and wealth, as well as our personal powers, for God and his Kingdom. Body, soul, spirit, brain, worship, work, and all activities require direction in accordance with God's will. Everything we do should be regulated so as to meet with his approval. All we are, all we do, all we know, all we have should feel the influence of God's guidance as we become informed concerning his wishes, his motives, and his ideals of life through Jesus Christ.

Christian stewardship has to do with our sharing with Christ responsibility for the establishment of his Kingdom, a world of Christlike persons living together as the family of God under the exemplary ideals of Jesus. This is the objective of Christian stewardship which got hold of the lives and possessions of the early Christians, and should get hold of us. We might say that Christian steward-

ship is that all-embracing contribution of body, mind, and spirit which a Christian makes in using his time, abilities, and material possessions as a trust from God, and in purposefully working with Him to accomplish his designs for humanity.

This means that the control and use of our material possessions, as well as their acquisition, come within the scope of that intelligent, orderly, and generous procedure which we accept as Christian stewards. The fact is that many Christians are deprived of that satisfying consciousness of the divine presence and comradeship which arises from using all their possessions of property and wealth as a trust from God. The recognition of God's sovereignty in the sphere of material possessions is convincing proof of the sincerity of our discipleship.

It is important in our daily living that we consider the handling of our property and wealth as of supreme significance. It is of equal importance with giving and saving; it includes both. Such qualities as foresight, good sense, self-control, self-denial, patience, conscientiousness, sacrificial spirit, and sincere trust in the goodness of God are an integral part of the total experience. It should even be pointed out that the giving of money is often a minor difficulty when contrasted with this Christian stewardship of all of our property and wealth. This is the very point at which the rich young ruler failed. He declared that he had kept the Law from his youth up, but when confronted with the serious business of putting all at the disposal of God he did not measure up.

It is not one-tenth for God and nine-tenths for us to do with as we selfishly and wilfully determine; all ten-tenths belong to God and must be administered for Him and his Kingdom. The love of Christ must so dominate us that our own welfare, the welfare of those for whom we are responsible, and the welfare of all mankind must enter into this serious business of handling our possessions and our whole economic life so as to advance his willingly accepted, world-wide sovereignty by our loyal obedience to Him.

(2) Then it matters how a Christian steward spends his income. His spending should make life more abundant for himself, his family, and humanity. It matters that he

saves to care for possible losses and for his responsibilities when his earning days are over. It matters how benevolently inclined he is in the handling of his possessions and his care for the needy. "If any one has this world's wealth and sees that his brother man is in need, and yet hardens his heart against him—how can such a one continue to love God?" (I John 3:17—Weymouth.) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt. 23:14).

(3) It matters how generously a Christian steward provides for the support of the worship and work of God. The Church of Jesus Christ holds responsibility for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. As members of the Church we should give serious thought to the needs of the Church at home and abroad. It is currently true that many Christians give to the support of the Church out of their superfluities and not out of their sacrifices. Adequate financing of the Church is a dire necessity if we are to see God's will done over the earth. The Church cannot do the will of God today on a simple subsistence level. Nor can it do it on a slight increase each year over the past year, especially when secured at minimum vision, conviction, faith, effort, fellowship in Christ, and planning. Is the Church adequately serving children, youth, adults—locally, nationally, and internationally? Such questioning should cause us to see the need for unprecedented increases in vital and life-giving support. Christian stewardship is the only answer. The tag-ends of our resources can never meet the needs.

4. How Shall a Christian Steward Determine His Church Giving?

(1) He might take a long and sympathetic look at these elements most certainly involved in genuine Christian giving:

(a) The Christian steward first gives himself unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus gave himself for us and our salvation. There was no doubt about this in Paul's mind. Remember what he wrote to the Galatians? "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and

gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The Macedonians felt likewise, for it is recorded of them "they first give their own selves to the Lord" (II Cor. 8:5). Giving oneself is God-like. "God so loved the world that He gave" (John 3:16). Giving oneself is a "natural" for the real Christian. God wants us to be like Him in this respect.

(b) The Christian steward gives out of a heart filled with the love of Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14). Paul reveals it in his great "love" chapter when he says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor. 13:3). Here is a major compulsion in giving.

(c) The Christian steward gives in the spirit of worship. His gifts therefore become a genuine sacrament.

(d) The Christian steward gives because he knows he holds responsibility for properly handling his possessions as a trust from God, and will sooner or later give account to God.

(e) The Christian steward gives cheerfully. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7).

(f) The Christian steward gives as God prospers him, and systematically. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Cor. 16:2).

(g) The Christian steward gives willingly and humbly. "If there be first a willing mind, it [the gift] is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (II Cor. 8:12). A certain humility is inherent. (Matt. 6:3-4.)

(h) The Christian steward gives bountifully. "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (II Cor. 9:6).

(i) The Christian steward does not hesitate to give sacrificially. He knows his Lord did. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9). "Freely ye have received, freely give," said Jesus (Matt. 10:8). Love cannot be limited.

(j) The Christian steward gives preferentially to the work and worship of God. Not

from his leftovers, or his superfluities, or his odds and ends. He first deliberately segregates a generous portion of his income for God and his Cause. This share is set aside in acknowledgment of God's ownership of all material resources. Such giving helps to sanctify the management of all the rest of one's income and possessions. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase" (Prov. 3:9). Jesus taught that the Kingdom should be given priority in our lives (Matt. 6:33). How can one do otherwise than to make his Cause a first charge against one's giving?

(2) Then he might take a long, heart-searching, and discriminating look at the various kinds of giving, or lack of it, which have become familiar to us as Christians. The sources are the Old Testament and New Testament, and the current financial responses of Church members to the call of the Church.

(a) *Sacrificial Giving* is first on the list in point of quality according to Christian standards. It is well illustrated by these specific instances:

The Poor Widow (Mark 12:41-44). According to Jesus, "This widow, poor as she is, has thrown in more than all the other contributors to the treasury; for they have all contributed out of what they could well spare, but she *out of her need* has thrown in all she possessed—all she had to live on" (Weymouth). Her gift is sometimes spoken of as "The Widow's Mite," but she is referred to at times as "The Opulent Poor Widow." No other giving rates higher than this.

The Woman with the Alabaster Box of Very Precious Ointment (Matt. 26:6-13). "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. . . . I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." (The Markan account says the ointment might have been sold for 300 shillings. Moffatt.) A great love prompted this bestowal of her costly possession; she had a right to give it. It even seems that she found great joy in bestowing it upon Him.

Pentecostal Giving (Acts 4:32). The early Christians were so moved by the example and spirit of Jesus that they willingly gave everything they had to the Kingdom work. In the Jerusalem Church at Pentecost the record reveals that "Not one of them claimed anything that belonged to him as his own" (Good-speed). In other words, they recognized that God was the rightful owner of all that they possessed.

The Churches of Macedonia (II Cor. 8:1-3). "We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." "I can testify that up to their means, aye, *and beyond their means*, they have given" (Moffatt).

Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2). "Chief among the publicans." "And rich." "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

One is deeply impressed by a super quality in these cases of giving. It is easy to detect in every one of them a sincerity and satisfaction in the sacrifices made.

John Wesley. It is not inappropriate to relate at this juncture how John Wesley gave. It is reported of him that when his income was 30 pounds a year, he lived on 28, and gave 2; when his income had increased to 150 pounds a year, he still lived on 28 and gave the remainder of his income to the work of the Kingdom. Is this sacrificial, or not?

When we get into the field of sacrificial giving, we sense the operation of very vital spiritual forces. Sacrificial giving reveals human hearts aflame with divine love. Such giving is very much alive. It carries the soul of the giver.

(b) *Proportionate Giving*.

Proportionate giving means the setting aside deliberately and willingly a definite part of one's income for the work and worship of God. This proportion, determine in accordance with Christian principles by the giver, is the first charge against one's total budget. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteous-

ness" is taken seriously and so implemented. The proportionate giver then gives out of this proportion regularly, thoughtfully, and systematically to the support of the total program of the Church, both at home and abroad.

The New Testament is clear about this matter of proportionate giving. In Acts 11:29 we read, "Then the disciples, *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea." In I Cor. 16:2 it is proposed that "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him*, that there be no gatherings when I come." Furthermore, these New Testament passages get support from the Old Testament. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; *every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessings of the Lord thy God* which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16:16-17). Paul found the principle in the sacred Scriptures of his forebears. We give most generously when we recall what God gives to us. Jesus on one occasion said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38). "To whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48 R.S.V.). Did Paul and Jesus have a proportion in mind when they taught this principle of proportionate giving? It is quite clear from the related Scripture passages that they did not. It is clear that were we to read any specific proportion into these statements we would be reading into these passages more than they say. Paul makes an unwavering demand for nothing less than one's utmost—"As God hath prospered him."

Paul obviously had arrived at the place in his own Christian experience where he could see clearly a plan of giving to the support of the work and worship of God which could stand the test of every Christian principle. In II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, he sets forth what seems to have been a regular procedure during a period of two years as he raised support for the suffering Christians at Jerusalem. And the fact that he had to work on the

Corinthians to give to this collection furnished him the opportunity to voice the fullest possible prerogatives of the Christian faith and life as related to giving. Note some of the qualities he says should characterize Christian giving, as revealed by the giving of the Macedonian Churches: "For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality. . . . They gave according to their means . . . and beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints. . . . first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. . . . As you excel in every thing—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us—see that you excel in this gracious work also."

"I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love is also genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."

"For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality. As it is written, He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack." (See also Exodus 16:18.)

He urged the Corinthians to give "not as an exaction but as a willing gift. The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us

will produce thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" (R.S.V.)

What an education in the principles of Christian giving Paul wrought for all of us in this masterful appeal to the Corinthians! How can one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and his followers escape the spirituality of such an appeal? Proportionate giving as taught in the New Testament should be practiced by all disciples of Christ. The proportion of one's income to be set aside for the support of the work and worship of God will be determined by the love and loyalty of the giver. And a growing Christian will increase the amount as he grows.

(c) *Christian Tithing.*

The principle of tithing (giving one-tenth of one's income to the support of religious enterprises) is as old as humanity. It has been tried and tested as a method of acknowledging God's goodness and gifts, his sovereignty and ownership. It is one method of expressing the stewardship of possessions. It is systematic and regular and provides a fund into which the Christian steward can dip at any moment for the support of religious enterprises which come to his attention and merit his approval and help. It is simple, concrete and practical. For all who have any doubt as to whether or not they are doing what God wants them to do, it furnishes a means for testing out their soul life and relieving their dubiousness. Many Christians give a tenth of their income willingly, cheerfully, not primarily because it is a law of God, but because they love God and want to share his endeavors to establish his kingdom in the world. "My Father worketh, and I work," said Jesus. They feel that in doing so they at least give as little as they should give. They find a spiritual satisfaction in the experience.

Regardless of everything that can justifi-

ably be said against it, tithing as a principle is a stimulating challenge to the love and loyalty of every Christian. As far as we know, it originated beyond the earliest moment of recorded history. It must have sprung from the close personal relationships which men had with God as they occupied and used the soil which He had created. This seems to be clear especially in the economic history of the people of Israel, for as they passed through the nomadic, the pastoral, and the trading stages of their development, paying the tithe as a sort of rent for the use of the land became a practice so significant that they felt it was a law of God to be obeyed meticulously in recognition of the God to whom they owed so much. They obviously felt that the land did not belong to them, even though they possessed it as a gift from God. "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine . . . I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 25:23, 55). The Levitical Law of property is in a sense a summary of their experiences in this field.

Ownership of the land also meant dominion over its produce. This dominion they fully recognized by setting aside a tenth of their increase for God and his worship. This tithe was considered holy and not to be used under any circumstance by the worshipper for himself. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30).

Then they felt that *in addition* to this tithe to maintain divine worship, they were obligated to care for certain social and charitable responsibilities; and to provide the expense of certain religious and social festivals held for the maintenance of patriotism and friendship. But next in importance to the holy tithe on the land they were obligated to care generously for their poor and unfortunate. For these poor a tithe of the crops was set aside every third year. Furthermore, every seventh year the poor were permitted to use whatever the fallow ground brought forth, including grapes and olives.

The Year of Jubilee is an interesting device set down in the midst of their financial regulations. It came every fifty years. The laws governing it are set forth in the 25th chapter of Leviticus. The land belonged to God, and could not be sold forever, thus pre-

venting selfish monopoly of it by grasping, greedy interests. Furthermore, sometimes the persons of those who possessed the land became involved in slavery because of debt. So every fiftieth year such persons were to be released and provisions made for the redemption of the land. These provisions seem to be idealistic and impracticable, but the law records them nevertheless.

Such adjustments as noted above seemed to relieve any inequities and injustices which came with administration of the complex system of religious financing built up through the centuries. If one desires to go into this complexity let him spend some time studying the detailed references to this financial system as set forth in such sections of the Pentateuch as all 27 chapters of Leviticus; Numbers 18: 20-32; Deut. 14:22-29; 26:12-15; and the many detailed commentaries on them.

All of these provisions did result in a financial system which certainly taught the meaning of worship and the duties of a loyal Israelite with regard to his property and wealth. He felt that tithing was a law of God, a requirement, a holy necessity. The principle of tithing is of historical significance. It smacks of the very nature of religion and worship. Furthermore, those who practice tithing today find it of great personal helpfulness and a genuine spiritual blessing.

(d) *Giving Sparingly—sometimes even grudgingly.*

It is always encouraging to hear reports that the members of our Christian churches have increased their gifts for religious enterprises during any given period of time. Whatever can be said or done to help them see the superb opportunity which is theirs to establish the Kingdom of God on earth is worthy and commendable. This educational process must continue.

However, when we look at local church records of giving we find many gifts totaling five, ten, fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five dollars apiece per year from persons who obviously give "sparingly" when their gift is measured over against their total incomes. The poor widow, the woman who poured the precious contents of the alabaster box of ointment on Jesus' person, such giving as characterized the early Church at Pentecost, the

giving beyond their means by the Macedonian Christians, Zacchaeus and his attitude, the support given by Barnabas, John Wesley's giving—all reveal a motive which seemingly is not sympathetically shared by the givers of such amounts as indicated. Is "Seek ye first the Kingdom" in the thought and practice of our present-day church members? Is giving "according to ability" accorded a Christian hearing? Is the principle of tithing considered as an acknowledgment of the sovereign dominion of God? Are the motive and practice of Christian giving ever thought of as a stimulation to spiritual growth? Is Christian stewardship ever reflected upon as having the possibility of helping church members to acquire money honestly, save it properly, spend it wisely, give it freely and joyously, and account for it in such a way that God can be faced momentarily without embarrassment? If those of our Christian people who give sparingly, sometimes grudgingly, would meditate in the conscious presence of the Christ on such questions as these, would it not result in a more unselfish outpouring of themselves and their substance? Many Christians have discovered that the voluntary and generous bestowal of oneself and one's possessions, expecting nothing but the approval of God in return, really contributes to soul peace and spiritual victory. If one really wants the kingdom of God to come, peace on earth to reign, the dire consequences of unnecessary poverty ameliorated, oppressive burdens lifted from humanity, fellowship with God and our fellow men greatly increased, and sorrow transmuted into happiness, why not test the Christian life to the point where one's gifts will be more in conformity with one's income? Test it to the point where one's gifts represent Christian insight and spiritual appreciation!

(e) *Non-Giving Christians.*

It would seem unnecessary to think of such a thing. Yet it is true that there is a host of persons nominally associated with the Christian Church whose hearts and minds have not been moved to *give of themselves* in Christian service and their *property and wealth* for the work which completely absorbed the loyalties of Jesus and held a firm place in his heart. Study the records of your local church. It might be revealing, but it places upon those of us who are trying honestly to do the Mas-

ter's will the added responsibility of helping them to become an active and vital part of the Kingdom enterprise. Warm hearts, evangelizing Christian fellowship, sympathetic approaches, intelligent presentation of Kingdom interests might work wonders with those who presently find themselves on the margin of Christlike interests.

The Church loses when its members are not active; the inactive members themselves sustain a perilous neglect of spiritual growth and satisfaction; the Kingdom is hampered in its progress; and the world suffers a setback in its Godly development. Surely such impairment of Christian progress needs looking into, and the persons involved need a spiritual rehabilitation.

Can it be possible that such delinquency in support of the Church as it shares with Christ the great mission of world Christianization is due to lack of understanding? Have we too mildly proclaimed the Great Commission that we "go into all the world . . . and teach all people"? Possibly it is appropriate to let Paul speak to us when in II Cor. 8:7 he says, "As ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us, see that ye abound in this grace [giving] also." This exhortation may come to all of us with a suggestiveness which will enrich our lives and expand our Christian services.

5. It Matters Whether We Give Ourselves and Our Possessions in Accordance with Our Abilities to Share Responsibility with Christ for the Effective Prosecution of His Work

It matters to God Himself; to his Son Jesus Christ; to ourselves and our immediate blood relations; to our friends of personal contact; to our friends or more or less remote relationship; and to every individual in God's world. Sometimes, because the family of God is innumerable we suspect we do not count; but we do!

Let us all become realistic Christian stewards! Let us decide once and for all that we will put God first in our lives and our budgets. Let us review objectively what we are doing today for the Church and its enterprises. Let us make a large place in our hearts for Christian stewardship!

IV

THE PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Field of Education, Cultivation,
and Promotion—The Leadership—
Types of Usable Instruments for the
Program—Sources of Stewardship In-
formation and Materials—"Follow Me"
Still Pleads the Savior!

STEWARDSHIP TAUGHT
MEANS
CHRIST'S WORK WROUGHT

IV. THE PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Every local Church should have a comprehensive, unified program of Christian stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion as a permanent part of its normal procedure. Such a program will definitely enrich and strengthen the total life of the church, and give it greater effectiveness in every aspect of its work. Temporizing and partial measures will usually prove inadequate. Christian stewardship, to be of vital importance, must be an integral part of the way of life in the Local Church. Some observations may be made appropriately at this point.

Jesus taught "the Twelve" with whom He closely associated in the early days of the Christian faith that the Kingdom of God *must be their first business and responsibility*. "The things pertaining to the Kingdom" were always on his heart. The responsibility He laid upon them He also lays upon us who are his disciples today. To share with those who do not have the privileges and spiritual comforts of the Gospel is always the first responsibility of a Christian steward. The ideals, values, and motives which Jesus emphasized must likewise be emphasized by us, if we are to "follow" Him. This is the stewardship for which we must ultimately account to Him.

Such a stewardship took all that He was and had. It will take all that we are and have. Truly, Christian stewardship is that all-embracing contribution of body, mind, and spirit which a Christian makes in using his time, abilities, and material possessions, as a trust from God, in purposely working with Him to accomplish his designs for humanity. Jesus led the way; we are summoned to follow, even though the task be weighty as a cross. "Come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21). "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . . my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29-30). Both statements, as He meant them, are correct! We become fortified, empowered, and inspired to press on because we know in our hearts that his way of life, over against all other ways, is best. It may be said of self just as truly as of possessions that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

This must be taught the members of the Church of Jesus Christ until every last one is making a vital contribution of self and possessions to the establishment of his Kingdom. To this achievement the Local Church must set its heart, and mind, and hand! How shall it proceed?

1. *The Field for Education, Cultivation, and Promotion*

(1) *The Congregation and Membership.*

The congregation is the continuing unit of expression with which Christian stewardship is concerned. It is as a part of the congregation that all members of the Church should join in worship. These individuals who have stood before the altars of the church and pledged themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and his program are the persons to whom we should feel a primary responsibility to carry the principles and practices of stewardship. It is one thing to start out in the Christian faith and life; it is another to continue the enterprise and enjoy a lifetime of spiritual growth. Peace of soul, victory of the spirit, and the sensing of spiritual development are involved. This spiritual growth can only be attained if the disciple actually enters into the life of worship and service, giving of himself and his possessions to the prosecution of the individual and world work of the Master. This involves Christian stewardship and its acceptance as a way of life. It is for the continuous education of the individuals thus committed to the Christian faith and life that the program of Christian stewardship in the Local Church is proposed.

In order to reach the total congregation and membership as directly as possible with stewardship principles and practices, it is best to set up a *designated period of time, say four weeks*, for intensive cultivation of the entire church, including every church group and assembly meeting during the period. It is recommended that the following specific principles should help fashion the program of activities:

(a) The period should become an integral part of the annual program.

(b) It should be so placed in the calendar as to bring about best results for the total program of the Local Church.

(c) Leadership responsibility should be

centered in the Committee on Christian Stewardship under the direction of the Official Board or Board of Stewards.

(d) The activities of the period should reach the entire membership and constituency, using as leaders all officials, leaders, teachers, counselors, and other capable persons of all auxiliary organizations operating under the auspices of the Local Church. The attention of all should be centered on Christian stewardship for the entire period.

(e) Specific goals may be set for achievement during the period.

(f) Direct appeals should be made (a) for the enlistment and training of prospective workers to care for all phases of the work of the Local Church; (b) for the enlistment of tithing stewards and stewards giving in other, preferably larger, proportions of their income; and (c) for definite increases in the number and size of pledges for current expenses as well as for World Service and other current benevolent enterprises of the Church.

(g) The period should include a definite effort to increase substantially the regular attendance at the services of worship.

(h) Procedure should involve the formal worship services of the Local Church, prayer, preaching, teaching, lay speaking, reading, conversation and discussion, distribution of stewardship literature, visual aids, dramatizations and pageantry, systematic visitation, appropriate publicity, as well as other means desired and locally available.

(i) The period should be preceded by a few weeks for the adequate preparation of the congregation and its leaders.

(j) The program for the period may be varied and enriched from year to year, and so coordinated as to use all available leadership and materials most effectively.

(2) *The Homes of the People.*

The homes of our people constitute a rich field for stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion. The Local Church should so influence the home life of its people that every Methodist child may enjoy such experiences as these:

(a) See and hear its parents talk with God, and read the Scriptures together.

(b) Enjoy a clear understanding that its parents worship and study with the congrega-

tion and the church school, and participate in the work of the Church.

(c) See the father take a lead in these matters.

(d) Discover, as it matures, that the father has gained the reputation of being a fine Christian gentleman in all of his daily transactions in the business, industrial, and economic life of which he is a part; that both mother and father have so lived in their immediate community as to have honored Christ, served his Kingdom, and influenced other lives to such commitments. One's Christian impact on the whole community, local, state-wide, nation-wide, and world-wide, through the normal channels of the Church is commendable.

(e) Hear in the home such conversations and witness such love displayed as to have no doubt in its mind that Christ really reigns in that home.

(f) See and have the opportunity to read such periodicals, books and literature, as a normal part of the home life, as shall show clearly the thinking of Christian parents and provide inspiration to support the total Christian experience.

(g) See such avocational and recreational participation throughout the year as shall build up bodies, minds, and souls in wholesome Christian fashion.

(h) Be privileged to gain a larger vision of the support of Christian enterprises by being allowed and encouraged to take more generous financial support to the Church School, or give to the support of the Church more liberally. The humble penny is the lowest possible standard. The less frequent nickel is better, of course. The extraordinary dime shows greater interest for most of us. What would happen to our Church within a generation if every Methodist child went to Church School or Church with A QUARTER FOR THE LORD! Infused with the Spirit of Christ such education could go far.

Such stewardship of Christian education in every Methodist home would put The Methodist Church on the path to its greatest spiritual victories since John Wesley set it going with that aggressive stewardship which characterized his entire life. Here is a superb opportunity for Methodist men and women to raise the level of Christian living and giving.

Parents will discover real help in fulfilling their parental responsibilities through such periodicals as *The Christian Home*, which may be ordered from The Methodist Publishing House.

(3) *Stewardship Education in the Church School.*

The elevation of the stewardship ideal should proceed regularly and consistently in the normal work of the Church School with all of its many phases of Christian expression. Here is a fine opportunity in a commendable educational atmosphere.

(a) Every officer and teacher in the Church School should receive basic training in Christian stewardship as an integral part of his preparation and periodic briefing. This would enable him to use stewardship principles and practices in the departmental worship services and the classwork. Most significant of all, leaders who practice Christian stewardship in their daily lives are very apt to communicate its spirit and practice to their pupils.

(b) Lessons in Christian stewardship appear with considerable regularity in our church school literature. The words "steward" and "stewardship" are not always specifically used. Nevertheless genuine stewardship is there by implication, specific interpretation, and in plentiful content. Officers and teachers alerted to these lessons and emphasizing them with clarity and vigor may go far in this field, and do much good.

Stewardship materials appear in the International Group Graded Lessons; the Closely Graded Lessons; Lessons for Youth in Small Churches; Programs for Youth in Small Churches; Units for Additional Sessions and Evening Meetings for Juniors, Intermediates, Senior-Young People; Materials for Parents; Lesson Courses for Adults; and Electives.

These periodicals are prepared by The General Board of Education of The Methodist Church through the Editorial Division and regularly published by The Methodist Publishing House, Pierce & Smith, Publishing Agents, 420 Plum Street, Cincinnati 2, Ohio; Editorial Offices, 810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tenn. They are the authorized lesson materials for all Methodist Church Schools. They are highly recommended.

(4) *Leadership Education in Christian Stewardship.*

An adequately prepared leadership is always an asset in any educational field. It is a necessity, not a luxury. This is true in the field of Christian stewardship.

At least two phases of leadership education in stewardship should be set forth, namely,

(a) Accredited or Approved Instructors in Christian stewardship should be prepared and used wherever possible. Opportunities are usually offered for the preparation of such instructors on local, city-wide, district-wide, conference-wide, and state-wide levels, both denominationally and interdenominationally, as well as in summer schools and camps. The Methodist Church through its Department of Leadership Education of the Division of the Local Church, 810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tenn., has a list of some 700 of these Accredited Instructors available for use in their respective localities. Write the Department about them.

(b) Study Classes should be set up in the Local Church where courses in Christian stewardship may be taught. The students should be local church officers, church school officials and teachers, leaders, counselors, and other capable prospective leaders selected from all local auxiliary church organizations and agencies. Accredited instructors will provide fine leadership for such classes. Where these are not obtainable, the pastor and other capable leaders should be used.

(c) At least three courses are available, namely (a) The Stewardship of Life—113b; (b) The Use of Possessions—132a; and (c) Financing the Church—614b. A correspondence course is available for 113b.

(5) *Auxiliary Organized Groups and Children.*

(a) Methodist Men.

The organized men's groups should be called upon to give full support to the program of Christian stewardship in the Local Church. Here is a tremendous power unit which, if properly challenged, will be of inestimable value. Stewardship is one of the first responsibilities of Methodist Men.

(b) Woman's Society of Christian Service.

This organization has a fine program of Christian stewardship. It has worked at it consistently through the years, and will prove of strategic value in providing leaders and

supporting the total program of stewardship education.

(c) Young Adult Fellowship.

Attention should be paid to this group by the officials and leaders in the Local Church. Recognition and use of prospective leadership material will in due season furnish continuity of church leadership personnel when current leaders can no longer carry on.

(d) Methodist Youth Fellowship.

Representatives of this body may be found annually in the various summer camps and assemblies, wide open to stewardship education and waiting for the opportunity to take it in. Recognition of them and their leaders in the stewardship education program in the Local Church is a prime necessity.

(e) Children.

Any church which neglects its children will sooner or later feel this neglect. The officers and teachers of children's groups and work should be carefully prepared to impart the spirit and message of Christian stewardship.

2. *The Leadership*

Methodism is led by a closely knit organization of persons whose authority and responsibilities stem from legislative conferences which meet periodically, and are composed of both the clergy and laity. Out of their deliberations comes the legislation which makes up the *Discipline* of The Methodist Church. This clearly provides that in all the work of the pastoral charge the minister is the actual head of the Local Church. He is responsible for the total program, so that in the field of stewardship the Local Church looks to him for leadership. He should be ably supported by all local leaders who hold responsibility for stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion. Let us consider this important matter of leadership.

(1) *The Pastor.*

Stewardship began in the heart of God. It came to perfect expression in Jesus Christ. It was definitely proved workable in the lives of disciples of Christ through Saint Paul, outstanding exponent of Christianity, and other leaders in the early Church. It must find expression in the heart and life of the pastor. If his soul is aflame with the work and way of Jesus, there is a real possibility that he

will give substantial and trustworthy leadership in the field of stewardship.

Of course, he must be certain as to just what Christian stewardship is, and that he himself is committed to it as a good steward of God. The use he makes of his time, abilities, and material possessions will reveal this commitment daily. Then he will sanction and lead a program by which he intends to impart the principles and practices of Christian stewardship to his flock.

What a wonderful opportunity there is for stewardship preaching! This is his most exclusive function and prerogative. To pour out his soul on Christian stewardship through a designated number of preaching efforts annually will have weight with other souls. He can make the offering in the worship services a distinctive educational experience. As he meets with classes for the training of new members, especially children, and then receives them into the Church, he has another opportunity of superb proportions. He may well pray the guidance of God in all these measures.

(2) *The Charge and Church Lay Leader.*

These leaders should be taken into the confidence of the pastor and their services used in the field of stewardship. They are an official part of a strategic organization working throughout The Methodist Church which holds responsibility to "initiate plans, develop literature, and perfect organization to utilize effectively in the work of the church and in the development of Christian character this vital doctrine of Christian faith and practice" (Par. 1515). These lay leaders are taught to come to a sympathetic understanding with the pastor regarding the work of the Church and the congregation. They are urged to counsel and cooperate with the pastor, supporting him and sharing leadership with him, in planning a strong program for the church. They are urged to gain the support of the members of the congregation for the program and in securing their active participation in bringing the program to an effective and successful realization. Surely, when properly selected in the first place, and then prepared for leadership, they should constitute a strong support for the pastor in his program for stewardship.

(3) *The Official Board or Board of Stewards.*

In Paragraph 180 of the *Discipline* the du-

Sixty

ties and responsibilities of this Board are set forth. One of the most important of these duties is clearly defined thus: "In cooperation with the pastor and the lay leader to promote the program of lay activities as outlined in Paragraphs 1482, 1502-8." The first item in the program is Christian stewardship. And in Paragraph 1503 this Board is held responsible for the program of lay activities under the direction of the General Board of Lay Activities. Again, emphasis is placed on Christian stewardship. Here is an open door through which the Official Board or Board of Stewards should pass to a carefully articulated program of Christian stewardship which would greatly strengthen the total program of the Local Church. Every member of the Board should be a consecrated Christian steward of New Testament caliber.

(4) *The Committee on Christian Stewardship.*

"A Committee on Christian Stewardship for each local church shall be elected annually by the Official Board or the Board of Stewards. The pastor and the lay leader shall be ex officio members of the committee. The committee shall correlate and promote stewardship in the local church in harmony with the plans of the General Board. It shall report to the Official Board or Board of Stewards and to the Quarterly Conference" (Par. 1516).

Suggested Procedure for Organizing the Committee.

(a) Let the pastor and lay leader study Paragraphs 1480 to 1519 inclusively, with special attention given to Paragraphs 1515 to 1518 dealing with stewardship.

If already organized and functioning, extend and strengthen its work and influence, planning the stewardship program and fitting it annually into the calendar and program of the Local Church. It would be well to look ahead and plan for two to four years in advance.

If already organized, yet dormant or inefficiently operative, activate it at once.

If not yet organized, proceed at once to do so.

Present the program to the Official Board or Board of Stewards and seek their approval always.

(b) The pastor and lay leader are ex officio members.

Other members should include able and carefully selected representatives of the following organizations within the Local Church, with the primary qualification of already being Christian stewards or actively interested in Christian stewardship:

- The Official Board, or Board of Stewards;
- *The Board of Education;
- *The Board of Missions and Church Extension;
- *The Board of Evangelism;
- *The Woman's Society of Christian Service;
- *Methodist Men;
- Methodist Youth Fellowship;
- Young Adult Fellowship;
- *Finance Committee;
- *Committee on Policy;
- Committee on Visitation;
- Committee on Good Literature;
- Committee on Farm and Home;
- Committee on Christian Vocations;
- Other Desired Leaders.

Create a committee of the size felt to be adequate for the Local Church, giving priority to representation of organizations marked with the asterisk.

(c) The Committee should be a permanent and active one.

It should have a chairman and a secretary, and to each of its members should be allocated some specific responsibility in the total program of stewardship education.

It should have regular and special meetings sufficient in number to care satisfactorily for its responsibilities.

(d) The Committee, after proper survey of the current program of the Local Church, should know and maintain contact with every element of actual and potential stewardship education and cultivation. Procedure may be as follows:

Set the Committee to work at once on a serious study of the Church's stewardship program with the intention of laying lasting foundations for the program that is to be.

Plan and execute an adequate program of stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion for the total Local Church.

This plan will inevitably include goals to be attained over set periods of time.

Check periodically on achievements and

make the facts known to the membership of the Local Church.

Christian motivation is involved in any enduring, generous and sacrificial giving of our people. We must set forth clearly the comprehensive, spiritual experience revealed in the New Testament as basic to this type of giving, both of self and possessions. No other type of giving will prove equal to our responsibilities as a Church.

(5) *Accredited or Approved Instructors in Christian Stewardship* (see IV, 1, 4).

3. *Types of Usable Instruments*

- (1) Addresses by Laymen (Men, Women, Youth). Three-Minute
- (2) Books and Texts.
- (3) Bulletins, Stewardship Worship.
- (4) Charts.
- (5) Classes, Leadership Education.
- (6) Conversation Groups.
- (7) Correspondence Courses.
- (8) Courses, Study.
- (9) Covenant Cards for Stewardship, Service, and Tithing Commitment.
- (10) Drama.
- (11) Filmstrips with Sound Recording or Scripts.
- (12) Forums.
- (13) Goals, Achievement.
- (14) Graphs.
- (15) Kodachrome Slide Worship and Project Sets with Scripts.
- (16) Leaflets and Booklets.
- (17) Motion Pictures with Sound Recordings.
- (18) Newspapers, Local.
- (19) Pageantry.
- (20) Phonograph Records.
- (21) Posters.
- (22) Press, The Church.
- (23) Radio Programs as Available, Local and National. Transcriptions.
- (24) Reading Courses.
- (25) School, Stewardship.
- (26) Training Night, Church.
- (27) University of Life.
- (28) Visitation Periods.

Such instruments and devices may fittingly provide for that year by year variation of program which will make possible in any Local Church an enriched experience for its people in Christian stewardship. Selection of

needed materials and instruments can be done only by those who know local situations, and are in position to fit them into a given program.

Varied, of course, will be the sources from which the Local Church will get its materials and instruments for the implementation of its program. Some difficulties may be encountered in getting exactly what the Local Church needs and wants. We are fortunate to have within The Methodist Church certain boards and agencies to help us. We name some directly related to the stewardship emphasis. All will be glad to counsel with you.

4. *Sources of Stewardship Information and Materials.*

(1) *The General Board of Lay Activities*, 740 Rush Street, Chicago 11, Illinois.

This Board maintains the Department of Stewardship in accordance with the provisions of the Methodist *Discipline*. Correspondence concerning all matters pertaining to Christian stewardship is invited.

It maintains a Department of Men's Work which organizes Methodist Men's Groups and helps inspire men to work in this field.

The Methodist Layman is the Board's official journal and carries quality materials in the field of Christian stewardship, men's work, and all lay activities.

The Board cooperates wholeheartedly with all of the General Boards and Agencies of The Methodist Church directly related to stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion, as well as all others indirectly related to this field.

(2) *The General Board of Education*, 810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tennessee.

An abundance of excellent literature, emphasizing and interpreting Christian stewardship especially through Church School periodicals, and leadership emanates from this Board with its various Divisions and Departments.

Attention should be called to the *Division of the Local Church* with its Departments of Christian Education for Children, Youth, Adults, Leadership Education, General Church School Work, the Christian Family, Audio-Visual Aids, and Missionary Education.

The excellent literature prepared under the guidance of the *Editorial Division*, implementing the work of the Board in a fine way, sup-

ports stewardship emphasis and aids in its interpretation wholeheartedly. It has Departments of Art Work, General Publications, Youth and Children's Publications.

(3) *The Interboard Committee on Christian Vocations*, 121 Seventeenth Avenue, South, Nashville 4, Tennessee.

This Committee deals specifically with the field of Christian and Church Vocations. As a Church we hold a stewardship responsibility here. Increasing emphasis will be placed in the future on Christian vocations as a channel through which stewardship may be interpreted to the people everywhere. The Church holds a stewardship for recruiting and preparing young men and women to meet the leadership needs of the Church in all phases of its work.

(4) *The General Board of Missions and Church Extension*, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, New York.

This Board has a Division of Foreign Missions, a Division of Home Missions and Church Extension, a Division of Education and Cultivation, and the Woman's Division of Christian Service. These have their various Departments, all of which welcome requests for their counsel concerning that great stewardship of the Church, the Christianization of the world.

The Editorial Offices of the Woman's Division of Christian Service are at the above address, while its Literature Headquarters and Distribution Offices are at 420 Plum Street, Cincinnati 2, Ohio.

(5) *The General Board of Evangelism*, 1908 Grand Avenue, Nashville 4, Tennessee.

Our Board of Lay Activities cooperates wholeheartedly with this Board in the field of Lay Evangelism. The Board of Evangelism offers a fine promotional literature for increasing church worship attendance.

(6) *The Methodist Publishing House*.

The Methodist Publishing House carries an excellent line of materials and supplies of great help in stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion. When ordering, please order directly from the Branch House serving your territory. Branch Houses are located at
516 N. Charles Street, Baltimore 3, Maryland.

581 Boylston Street, Boston 16, Massachusetts.

740 Rush Street, Chicago 11, Illinois.

420 Plum Street, Cincinnati 2, Ohio.

1910 Main Street, Dallas 1, Texas.

28 E. Elizabeth Street, Detroit 1, Michigan.

1121 McGee Street, Kansas City 6, Missouri.

810 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tennessee.

150 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, New York

642 Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh 30, Pennsylvania.

521 S. W. 11th Avenue, Portland 5, Oregon.

417 E. Grace Street, Richmond 16, Virginia.

85 McAllister Street, San Francisco 2, California.

The Methodist Publishing House is the distributing agency for all audio-visual aids prepared under the direction of the Radio and Film Commission of The Methodist Church. The membership of this Commission represents every Methodist Board and Agency working in this field. When in need of audio-visual aids and equipment, write the Branch House serving your territory. Consult it for motion pictures, filmstrips, and color slides in which stewardship is emphasized and interpreted. Its catalog of materials and supplies even carries a suggested first-year budget for Local Churches desiring to equip themselves for the use of visual aids.

Then it carries a fine variety of books, textbooks, other publications, as well as worship bulletins which may be selected and used in stewardship education, cultivation, and promotion.

(7) *The Church Press.*

The Methodist Church has a laudable church press reaching through its official church-wide paper, *The Christian Advocate* (740 Rush Street, Chicago 11, Illinois), and its other church-wide and regional journals, into every corner of Methodism. These carry stewardship materials in abundance and will greatly aid the Local Church in this field.

5. *"Follow Me" Still Pleads the Savior!*

Here is a program of Christian stewardship for the Local Church. It is designed to help in solving three problems presently faced by the whole Church: (1) *the shortage of trained workers* available to carry on the total program; (2) *the insufficiency of funds* to support

its total program with its service agencies reaching out to the ends of the earth; and (3) *the necessity for more aggressive action and a greatly expanded program* if the Christian Church is to help Christ win the world to his way of life. We must keep in mind that the Christian Church is the body of Christ. It is through this body that his way of life must reach the world.

Persons are important. In Jesus' day it was noted that "the harvest truly is plenteous," but "the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37). The harvest has been plenteous ever since. The shortage of laborers persists. A far greater number of laymen (men, women, and youth) should find employment for their time, abilities, and material possessions in the Local Churches in so many of which it is discouraging to note the large percentage of church members who find no place or use for their abilities. A few workers greatly overworked should be superseded by a large number trained for specific tasks and enjoying work with the Lord Jesus Christ for the establishment of his Kingdom. One may critically reply that we need quality, not quantity. The fact is we need both. It may be justifiably charged that this problem has been left too frequently to a fortuitous combination of circumstances at a moment of pathetic need. Why not look ahead and make specific preparations for a reserve (a "stockpile") of trained workers possessing a spiritual quality as influential in the work of the Church as that metallic element known as uranium possesses a radioactive quality in the world of basic elements? Let the Church effectively teach the Christian stewardship of self, and it will be well on the way to doing this very thing, namely, solving the problem of the shortage of trained workers.

Funds are important. Once the Christian stewardship of self has been deeply instilled in the life of the Church, the Christian stewardship of possessions will take hold more naturally and effectively. The love of Christ will really constrain us and a superb generosity, beyond anything we have ever known in the past, will characterize our people. Funds in amounts consistent with our increasingly aggressive spiritual program will be released.

It is recorded of Jesus in Luke 4:16-21 that He came to Nazareth, his home town, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

He stood up to read. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, He opened it and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . to heal the brokenhearted . . . to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." It is reported that He then closed the book, gave it back to the minister, and sat down. When the attention of those who attended the synagogue service was fastened upon Him, He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." *He had accepted the great stewardship.*

When He went to the cross He said, "It is finished." He had fulfilled the stewardship of his earthly life. And yet Christ is still at work in this world. The Church is his body. He works through us who are its members. He depends upon our voices to proclaim the good news, our hands to minister to human need, our feet to run his errands of mercy, and our material possessions to support his work.

He made this clear when He prayed "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). He is the Perfect Steward. He pleads with us to "Follow Him."

The program of Christian Stewardship for the Local Church in this Manual is suggested for the achievement of these results. It is a practical program, clear and tangible, thoroughly possible and workable. Every Local Church in Methodism could inaugurate and maintain it as an integral part of its annual program of activities. Every minister and layman would ultimately feel the lift and lilt of it. Official Boards or Boards of Stewards, tenderly affectioned toward the Christ, may well adopt it and work at it in the spirit of the Perfect Steward.

STEWARDSHIP TAUGHT MEANS CHRIST'S WORK WROUGHT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgment is gratefully made to the International Council of Religious Education for permission to cite a few passages from their Revised Standard Version of the New Testament; also to the University of Chicago Press for permission to quote from the Bible: An American Translation.

